

# Sunbeam Fostering Agency

Sunbeam Fostering Agency Limited

383 Broad Lane, Coventry CV5 7AX

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this independent fostering agency

This privately owned independent fostering agency is one of three individually registered independent fostering agencies operated by this organisation.

The agency was registered with Ofsted on 28 March 2011.

The agency has three offices, the main one in Coventry and two further offices in Nottingham and Blackburn. The agency offers emergency, short-term, respite, long-term and parent and child placements. The agency is specifically able to meet the needs of unaccompanied children from outside the UK. At the time of this inspection, there were 119 fostering households caring for 155 children.

The manager has submitted their application to be registered with Ofsted.

### Inspection dates: 7 to 11 November 2022

**Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account**      **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected      good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers      requires improvement to be good

The independent fostering agency provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

**Date of last inspection:** 17 January 2022

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good**

Children make good progress. They form positive relationships with their foster carers and are valued members of their foster family. They are encouraged and supported to develop and grow as individuals. Foster carers and agency staff are proud of children's achievements. As a result, children experience enjoyable childhoods, and develop emotional resilience that helps to prepare them for adulthood.

There is a good matching process. Managers and the staff work in close partnership with the placement team, foster carers and professionals to ensure that they can meet the needs of the children before they move in with foster carers. For example, specific questions are asked of placing authorities before unaccompanied asylum-seeking children move in with foster carers. This is to ensure that they understand what being part of a foster family means and contributes to well-informed decisions. This process has also reduced the number of incidents of children going missing from care.

Children settle quickly into their new home. The agency promotes the importance of stability and positive family relationships. Some foster families support brothers and sisters to live together. All the foster carers ensure that the children have safe contact with people who are important in their lives, in line with their local authority care plans. This helps the children to maintain strong friendships and family ties.

The agency and foster carers prioritise children's needs and ensure that they are met well. Children have regular access to health services, in line with their health plans. Children understand the importance of education and learning. All the children are receiving education and making good progress from their starting points.

Children enjoy a range of clubs and hobbies. The agency hosts a range of seasonal and school holiday events for the foster carer households. All the children, including birth children, can join a weekly activity during the summer holiday. This is supported by the agency's manager and the staff team. These events are well attended and enjoyed by all.

Children develop independence skills appropriate to their age and understanding. For example, one child has worked while at college and saved the money to buy a car. She is now taking driving lessons. These experiences help to build the children's confidence and growing sense of self.

The views and experiences of the children and foster carers are valued by the agency. There are clear complaints procedures and there is regular consultation. Foster carers praise supervising social workers for the support they provide. For example, supervising social workers attend all meetings with foster carers that relate to a child. Foster carers also said they enjoy opportunities to meet other foster

carers, join training and participate in regular therapy sessions. As a result, foster carers feel listened to and included.

### **How well children and young people are helped and protected: good**

Children feel safe living with their foster carers. Foster carers and staff have good knowledge of individual children and their potential risks. They follow procedures to keep them safe. Safer care plans and risk assessments are in place and regularly reviewed. They provide clear guidance to foster carers, which reduces risks to the children.

The manager and staff team's response to significant incidents and safeguarding concerns involving the children and foster carers is generally good. There is close partnership working with external agencies. Foster carers are supported during any allegations or investigations. When a historic incident was not well managed, lessons were learned and practice developed. For example, safety plans are now used to help to ensure the safety of the children and foster carers. However, the quality of these documents is not yet consistently good. Actions are agreed and taken to safeguard children during a period of high risk, but they are not always reflected in the safety plan. The manager is aware that this is an area for development. When appropriate, the manager will challenge the practice of external agencies and advocate on behalf of the children and foster carers to ensure safe outcomes.

The manager ensures that post-allegation reviews are carried out and, where appropriate, commissions the use of an independent social worker to undertake investigations and look for lessons that could be learned. Post-allegation reviews are taken to panel and the agency decision-maker and are shared with the local authority designated officer. This ensures an independent overview of practice and foster carer approvals.

The agency provides a range of internal resources to staff, foster carers and the children. This includes therapeutic training and group and one-to-one therapy-based sessions. For example, the agency provides specialist training to foster carers who support unaccompanied asylum-seeking children who are at risk of exploitation and have experienced trauma. This ensures that the children and foster carers receive the right support.

There are effective systems that support the recruitment of foster carers, staff and panel members. Procedures are regularly reviewed and developed. There is clear management oversight of recruitment, which helps to ensure that only safe adults provide care and support to children.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good**

The manager is working hard to develop the service. She has a stable team of staff who are energised by her vision. The agency has invested in, and increased, the region's management team and has also increased the number of managers at an

operational level. Together, they continue to develop a caring, reflective service that is child-focused.

There are a range of established systems that enable tracking and monitoring in the agency at an operational level. The organisation uses patterns and trends across the three individually registered independent fostering agencies to identify areas for development. For example, after a series of incidents, specific training in relation to under-fives was run for the staff and foster carers caring for and supporting children in this age group. However, this course has only been run once and has not been available to new foster carers and staff. As a result, the impact of this measure has not been maximised.

At an agency level, the manager also monitors a range of areas. However, there is no system or meetings where the manager and her line manager track and review child protection or serious practice incidents. This is a missed opportunity to ensure that these are addressed in line with policy, ensure the safety and well-being of the children and foster carers and are concluded in a timely, robust manner, and lessons learned.

Staff and foster carers continue to develop practice. All foster carers, except one, have completed the training, support and development standards for foster care within their first year of fostering. Staff and the foster carers are provided with a range of training opportunities. Skills to foster is underpinned by a therapeutic model of practice. Staff and foster carer skills continue to be developed. For example, all managers are currently undertaking a modular course on systemic social work practice.

Staff and foster carers are well supported through a range of systems, including regular supervision sessions, annual appraisals, support groups and therapeutic group sessions. Staff feel valued by their manager and enjoy the training and development opportunities she provides.

The manager and staff provide permanency for children through recruiting and assessing a suitable and diverse range of families to meet the needs of the children. The cultural diversity of the staff team successfully supports the recruitment and approval of a culturally diverse group of foster carers.

Overall, social workers carry out good-quality assessments that provide considered analysis around applicants' strengths and vulnerabilities. The manager has used lessons learned to develop the recruitment and assessment process. This specifically relates to foster carers who have had contact with, or are transferring from, another independent fostering agency or region. For example, questions on the application form and at the initial visit have been strengthened. Assessments of foster carers wishing to transfer between regions within the agency will now be conducted by an independent social worker. This strengthens the assessment process and ensures that children live with foster carers who are able to meet their needs.

The agency is yet to complete a full investigation into a specific case linked to a foster carer transferring between the agency's regions. A range of actions have been taken because of this approval and linked child protection concerns. However, until a full investigation is undertaken, the agency will not be able to be confident of practice moving forward. This has been recognised by the agency and a plan is under way to start this piece of work.

The panel chair and panel members provide good-quality independent scrutiny of the agency and contribute to the development of the agency's practice. The agency decision-maker makes reasoned decisions, with clear qualifying determinations. The agency decision-maker, panel chair and the agency's leaders now meet regularly. Panel membership continues to be reviewed to ensure diversity, and the panel includes a good range of qualified and experienced professionals. Panel members have annual appraisals.

## What does the independent fostering agency need to do to improve?

### Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) must take to meet the Care Standards Act 2000, Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and the national minimum standards. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
<p>The fostering service provider must compile a written statement in relation to the fostering service ("the statement of purpose") which consists of—</p> <p>a statement as to the services and facilities (including any parent and child arrangements) provided by the fostering service. (Regulation 3 (1)(b))</p>	31 December 2022
<p>The registered person must maintain a system for—</p> <p>improving the quality of foster care provided by the fostering agency. (Regulation 35 (b))</p> <p>The registered person should ensure that there are monitoring systems in place that identify shortfalls in the quality of care and act on these to improve the quality of care and experiences of children.</p> <p>This specifically relates to—</p> <p>managers conducting a full investigation into a specific case where a foster carer transferred across from another independent fostering agency in the same organisation;</p> <p>ensuring that actions implemented at an organisational level are measurable and reviewed and have a positive impact on children;</p> <p>tracking child protection and serious practice concerns at an agency level to ensure that appropriate actions have been taken in a timely manner.</p>	31 January 2023

## **Recommendation**

- The registered person should ensure that staff implement a proportionate approach to any risk assessment. This specifically relates to ensuring that any safety plans put in place as a result of a child protection or practice concern are of a consistently good standard and ensure all parties are clear about their responsibilities and the actions required to safeguard children and support foster carers. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 25.2)

## **Information about this inspection**

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people using the social care common inspection framework' This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and the national minimum standards.

## **Independent fostering agency details**

**Unique reference number:** SC425236

**Registered provider:** Sunbeam Fostering Agency Limited

**Registered provider address:** 12 Waterside Drive, Langley, Slough SL3 6EZ

**Responsible individual:** Karamjit Dhull

**Registered manager:** Post vacant

**Telephone number:** 02476 466718

**Email address:** info@sunbeamfostering.com

## **Inspectors**

Dawn Bennett, Social Care Inspector  
Anne Daly, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2022